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Respected Committee,

The evolution of my writing style has taken place from my sophomore year of high school until the present. Initially focusing personally on poetry and short story; high school introduced the concept of the short essay and short research papers respectively. Unable to synthesize my writing style with the introduced styles, creative writing for its own sake had quickly faded from my purview. Rather, I learned how to construct formal thesis statement and a five paragraph essay initially, with a longer formal structure for short research papers afterward - essentially one- source five-paragraph essays or three-source research comprised of three sources. This continued into my sophomore year of college. The difference being essentially the subject matter to which I would be writing. Insofar as an English major is concerned, expansion from classic authors evolved into more modern or contemporary writers. An example of this would be a departure from Shakespeare to Twain. Additionally, in high school predominantly British literature was taught and researched, with expansion into world and American literature during community college. Up to this point writing was done from the classical tradition of seeking an agreed upon interpretation and definition of classics instead of formulating personal interpretation. Indeed, even original works I had written were to follow traditional guidelines set forth by literary forbearers. This in retrospect was done to provide understanding of base concepts and forms with the premise of a student being not up to the task of creating original work or proper personal analyzation of literature without some grounding in the basics which had been up until that point classically taught.

The greatest evolution to my interpretation and writing of literature has been seen in the last two years, as greater expansion of literature, theory, and writing styles had taken place. A return to poetry found me unfortunately lacking in my personal opinion, as my skills in that area had atrophied due to disuse. Unaccustomed to formulating originality in form and function, instead I relied on traditional form and concepts for the scope of my writing for most of my poetry. It was not until the end when true individuality could be seen in my work, incorporating variations of form as well as personally significant subject matter that was a refreshing change of pace after a feeling of stagnancy. Insofar as essays and research were concerned, the scope and magnitude expanded, with distinctions between the two blurring. Papers became three to five page MLA format with three to five sources regardless of the type of writing assignment given. At this point argumentative and analytical papers were introduced, with greater proficiency with the former rather than the latter. Despite difficulty with theory class, the subjects served to provide a broader understanding and appreciation for literature as a whole, and a sense of freedom to decide upon theories with which to interpret the works I perused. Additionally, my time with a Psychology

major has inured me to writing systematic papers, in essence a structure of point one, point two, and so on. This has been a struggle personally as English papers generally are preferred to have a synthesis of ideas throughout the paper rather than the subject being discussed in terms of systematic lists. While I am still struggling with this issue, there has been slow progress in this area and I look to incorporate what I have learned in each discipline to form a writing style that has a natural synthesis and beauty regardless of the subject matter involved or the format required by the instructor. Sadly, I have lacked due to circumstance the time and ability for creative pursuits outside of formal papers, but believe that I can apply the creative spark properly with more time and practice. That is, I am at the point in my writing career where I have come to understand that it is sometimes necessary to break the rules in order to be a good writer; however knowledge of the rules is necessary in order to know when and how to break them for an overall improved work of literature. Additionally, understanding of multiple and often contradictory theories has allowed for greater freedom in writing as I have more viewpoints with which to write or avoid as the requirement or personal tastes indicate. This leads also to the beginnings of a focal area for a niche of sorts both in the interpretation and production of literature.

For the purpose of this portfolio, I have chosen a creative essay, an analytical assessment of a poem, and a research paper for inclusion. In this, I felt the research paper is indicative of my best work, having evolved from a short opinion paper, to a simple research paper, to an application of multiple layers of research and more complex perspective. The creative essay chosen as part of this portfolio was originally written for English 305 in the spring of 2015. With the overall theme of nature, our class was assigned to write a short paper of the personal meaning and correlation to our own lives. I feel that in this paper I applied humor and personal context while expanding on the topic. My perspective, contained within, is that I have had an alternatively synergistic and antagonistic relationship with nature. The piece clarifies this through sharing of personal history and personal reflection. The downside to this work prior to minor revision for inclusion into my capstone portfolio dealt primarily with references contained within the paper that necessitated being in the class in order to understand. I have subsequently expanded the paper to include this background information as it paints a more complete picture. The psychoanalysis of the poem "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath was originally written for English 200 in spring 2014 with an eye toward application of a psychological theory toward a literary work, particularly in the context of gender variance of perspective. In analyzing the poem, I gained insight not only into the personal motivations of the writer as a person, but on a deeper level the struggle that Plath coped with in the loss of her father different from that traditionally taught to males. The biggest area of improvement, in retrospect, was in the traditional perspective of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical approach. In this, medicalized and sterile, a great deal of the human element is lost in translation. As a result, I feel this limited the quality of the analysis done on the poem. However, I have opted to leave the paper as it was originally written, to provide insight to the quality of work at that point, beginning exploration of gender studies, and application of psychological theory.

This is contrasted with my primary research paper, which implements a higher quality of analysis due to Bruno Bettelheim's interpretations of psychoanalysis, which have a greater humanistic element, and by extension, a deeper connection to the other themes of both the research paper and the source text. The original research paper began as an opinion paper written for English survey courses in American Literature, in fall of 2013. The premise of this opinion piece was to

demonstrate human hypocrisy through Mark Twain's *Letters from the Earth*, written in the latter part of his life following significant financial and personal loss. As an expansion of this concept, for English 200, research was performed which refined this concept by application of a religiosity toward the hypocritical viewpoints. In this, I felt that the paper had gained greater depth and personal context, with a reduction of the types of generalities often associated with opinion pieces. In English 499 of fall 2015, the further expansion and revision of this work has taken place by application of research and psychoanalysis, from the interpretations of Bruno Bettelheim, with a focus on the internal human struggle Twain experienced during this time of his life as expressed through the source text. Rather than remove the earlier hypocrisy and religiosity from the paper, instead I have sought to integrate them into the new concept as conceptual bridges for the reader, and more concrete examples of the conceptual psychoanalysis. In this iteration of the paper I feel I have completed my best work to date, with the only fault I can immediately find conceptually is that subsequent academic studies have opened new possibilities for expansion beyond the scope of the capstone timeframe.

Through my writing, I have come to a better understanding of myself. The multiple perspectives through which text is analyzed has been turned inward, the forms of written expression reflect upon the synthesis of information taken in, and the self. The poetry I have written are the simplest reflections of my own values and the most pure. The creative essays have taught greater appreciation for my connection to the external world. Research and application increase the understanding and value of others despite, or maybe due to, their differences from myself. The opportunities afforded me throughout my undergraduate study have ultimately not only expanded my capacity with academics, but as an individual.

Sincerely,

Raymond Joseph Yates

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